

Middle Class Economics: Supporting the LGBT Community

The President's 2016 Budget is designed to bring middle class economics into the 21st Century. This Budget shows what we can do if we invest in America's future and commit to an economy that rewards hard work, generates rising incomes, and allows everyone to share in the prosperity of a growing America. It lays out a strategy to strengthen our middle class and help America's hard-working families get ahead in a time of relentless economic and technological change. And it makes the critical investments needed to accelerate and sustain economic growth in the long run, including in research, education, training, and infrastructure.

These proposals will help working families feel more secure with paychecks that go further, help American workers upgrade their skills so they can compete for higher-paying jobs, and help create the conditions for our businesses to keep generating good new jobs for our workers to fill, while also fulfilling our most basic responsibility to keep Americans safe. We will make these investments, and end the harmful spending cuts known as sequestration, by cutting inefficient spending and reforming our broken tax code to make sure everyone pays their fair share. We can do all this while also putting our Nation on a more sustainable fiscal path. The Budget achieves about \$1.8 trillion in deficit reduction, primarily from reforms to health programs, our tax code, and immigration.

The Budget supports and expands opportunity for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community by:

Ensuring Social Security Benefits for Same-Sex Married Couples. The Budget proposes to amend the Social Security Act to ensure all lawfully married same-sex couples will be eligible to receive Social Security spousal benefits, regardless of where they live. Currently, if a legally married same-sex couple lives in a State that does not recognize their marriage, these Social Security benefits are unavailable under Federal law. This means that for a couple that marries in one State where same-sex marriage is recognized and then moves to another State where it is not, the protection that Social Security spousal benefits provides to families is unavailable. Under this President's proposal, such married couples would have access to these benefits.

Expanding Access to Health Coverage. The Affordable Care Act ensures that Americans can access high-quality, affordable coverage, providing health insurance to millions of Americans who would otherwise be uninsured. Insurance companies are no longer able to offer plans that discriminate against consumers due to pre-existing conditions, and because of the law, insurers can no longer offer plans that turn someone away just because he or she is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Millions of families across the country are enrolled in either private insurance through the Health Insurance Marketplace or coverage through Medicaid. Americans have the security of knowing that if they want to change jobs or start their own business, they will have access to health insurance for their family. Additionally, premium tax credits and cost sharing assistance are making coverage affordable.

Addressing Health Care Disparities. The Budget supports community effort to focus on prevention, including using evidence-based interventions to address tobacco control, obesity prevention, and better nutrition and physical activity. The Budget also invests in expanding the health care workforce, as well as investing in health centers to provide primary care services in medically underserved communities across the country. And continuing efforts to improve data collection on health disparities will help

policymakers have the knowledge and tools they need to continue to address the health needs and concerns of the LGBT community.

Maintaining Affordable, High-Quality Primary and Preventive Care. Across the United States, 1,300 health centers operate over 9,000 primary care sites that serve as high-quality, dependable sources of primary care services in communities. The Budget invests \$4.2 billion, including \$2.7 billion in new mandatory resources, in the Health Centers program in 2016 to support services for an estimated 28.6 million patients. In total, the Budget provides \$8.1 billion in new mandatory resources over three years to support health centers.

Civil Rights Enforcement and Hate Crime Prevention. The Budget supports activities at the Department of Justice to ensure the protection of civil rights. The Budget provides additional resources for the Department of Justice Community Relations Service (CRS) to respond to alleged hate crimes on the basis of race, color, or national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. The Budget also adds \$7 million for the U.S. Attorneys to hire 60 dedicated civil rights protection and enforcement attorneys.

Protecting LGBT Workers from Discrimination. No current Federal law adequately protects lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) workers from employment discrimination. As part of a commitment to expanding opportunity for all hardworking Americans, the President signed an Executive Order prohibiting Federal contractors from discriminating against LGBT employees and prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity in federal employment. The Budget provides \$114 million for the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs to ensure robust enforcement of this and other protections against discrimination.

Improving Access to Services under the Violence Against Women Act. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), signed by President Obama in 2013, prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in VAWA funded programs and improves access to services in the STOP grant program. The Budget includes \$474 million in Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women grants and assistance to support victims of violence, including LGBT victims of domestic violence.

Supporting Housing Assistance for People Living with HIV/AIDS. The Budget provides \$332 million for HUD's Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program to address housing needs among people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. The program provides States and localities with the resources to create comprehensive strategies for providing housing assistance that gives patients the stability needed for effective treatment. In partnership with Federal agencies through the HIV Care Continuum, HUD is working to improve outcomes that promote greater achievements in viral suppression through the coordination and alignment of housing support with medical care. HUD and the Administration also are proposing legislative reforms that would update HOPWA's grant formula to distribute funds based on more robust Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data on persons living with HIV, rather than the cumulative number of HIV cases.

Expanding Access to HIV/AIDS Treatment, Care, and Prevention. The Budget expands access to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment activities, and supports the goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and HIV Care Continuum Initiative to reduce HIV incidence, increase access to care, and reduce HIV-related health disparities. The Budget invests \$2.3 billion in the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program to provide treatment and care completion services for people living with HIV, which includes

\$900 million for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program to ensure that people living with HIV have access to life-saving antiretroviral medications.

The Budget also invests \$1.1 billion for CDC HIV/AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Tuberculosis, and Viral Hepatitis activities, and aligns HIV funding with the epidemic by requiring public health departments to target resources where the epidemic is most concentrated. The Budget includes an increase of \$12 million for HIV/AIDS prevention to support effective, scalable, and sustainable prevention strategies along the HIV continuum of care for persons living with HIV and populations at highest risk for HIV and to develop integrated state-wide plans for HIV prevention, care, treatment, and other supportive services. The Budget also doubles funding for viral hepatitis to prevent deaths due to viral hepatitis, reduce hepatitis C among young people, and reduce mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B.

Ending Homelessness. In partnership with communities across the country, the Administration has made significant progress toward the President's ambitious goals of ending homelessness, especially among veterans. Major cities, including Salt Lake City, Utah and Phoenix, Arizona, have ended chronic homelessness among veterans. And in January, New Orleans, Louisiana became the first major American city to end veteran homelessness entirely. Nationally, veteran homelessness is down 33 percent and the total number of people experiencing chronic homelessness on a single night is down 21 percent from 2010 to 2014.

With continued focus from Federal, state and local partners, we are on a path to end veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. The Budget includes \$2.5 billion for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants, which will support 15,000 additional families through rapid rehousing and an estimated 25,500 new units of permanent supportive housing targeted to the chronically homeless. These funds, in coordination with the targeted special purpose Housing Choice Vouchers, will support the Administration's efforts to end chronic homelessness in 2017 and to make significant progress in ending homelessness across all other populations.

Runaway Homeless Youth Program. The Budget provides an additional \$5 million for the Runaway, Homeless, Youth program to support program services in the Transitional Living Programs (TLP) and to provide additional transitional services for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) youth. This includes \$1 million to support services to LGBTQ youth.

Encouraging State Paid Leave Initiatives. Too many American workers must make the painful choice between caring for their families and a paycheck they desperately need. While the Family and Medical Leave Act allows many workers to take job-protected unpaid time off to care for a new baby or sick child, or tend to their own health during a serious illness, millions of families cannot afford to use unpaid leave. A handful of States have enacted policies to offer paid leave, and the Federal government can encourage more States to follow their lead. The Budget includes \$2 billion for the Paid Leave Partnership Initiative to assist up to five States that wish to launch paid leave programs, following the examples of California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. States that participate in the Paid Leave Partnership Initiative would be eligible to receive funds for the initial set up and half of the benefit costs of the program for three years. The Budget also includes a \$35 million State Paid Leave Fund to provide technical assistance and support to States that are still building the infrastructure they need to launch paid leave programs in the future.

Making a High-Quality College Education More Affordable. An estimated two-thirds of job openings will require some postsecondary education and training by 2020. The President has placed a high priority on making college affordable and helping Americans obtain a meaningful college certificate or degree. Beginning in 2009, the Administration has increased the maximum Pell Grant by more than \$1,000, to \$5,775 in school year 2015-16, and provided additional tax benefits to help families pay for college. The Administration ended subsidies to banks under the guaranteed student loan program and reinvested those savings to help more students and families afford college with increased funding to the Pell Grant program. In addition, the Administration has expanded income-driven repayment options, such as the President's Pay As You Earn plan, to help more borrowers manage their student loan debt. In 2013, the Department of Education introduced the College Scorecard to provide critical information about college value to assist prospective students and their families in the college search and selection process, and the President announced the development of a college ratings system to identify colleges providing the best value and encourage all colleges to improve.

The Budget builds on this progress and charts a path forward on the President's plan to make college more affordable. The Budget:

- **Provides Tuition-Free Community College for Responsible Students.** The President's America's College Promise proposal makes community college free for responsible students, enabling them to earn a certificate, an associate's degree or up to two years' worth of credits towards a bachelor's degree without paying any tuition or fees. Everyone will be required to do their part: 1) states must invest more in higher education and training 2) community colleges must strengthen their programs and increase the number of students who graduate, and 3) students must take responsibility for their education, earn good grades, and stay on track to graduate. Students would continue to qualify for federal student aid (including Pell grants), which could help cover other costs of attendance, such as books, supplies, housing, and transportation.
- **Ensures that Pell Grants Keep Pace with Inflation.** Pell Grants are central to our efforts to help low and moderate income students afford college. In the 2014-15 award year, Pell Grants provided an estimated \$31 billion in college aid to 8.2 million students. Since 2013, Pell Grants have been adjusted for inflation annually, but unless Congress acts, this will end in 2017 and the value of Pell Grants will start to erode, making it even harder for families to afford college. The Budget addresses this, supporting the continued indexing of Pell Grants, to ensure that their value is not eroded by inflation.
- **Keeps Student Loans Manageable.** The Administration is helping student borrowers with existing debt manage their obligations through income-driven repayment plans, such as the Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) plan, which cap student loan payments at 10 percent of monthly discretionary income. The Department of Education has contacted struggling borrowers to make sure they are aware of these new options, and ensured that they have the information they need to choose the best one to help them responsibly manage their debt. The Budget proposes to extend PAYE to all student borrowers and reform the PAYE terms to ensure that the program is well-targeted and to safeguard the program for the future.
- **Simplifies Education Tax Benefits for All Students and Families.** While the creation of the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) in 2009 made college more affordable for millions

of students and their families, our system of tax incentives for higher education is complex, and families are sometimes unable to take full advantage of the benefits. Building on bipartisan reform proposals, the Budget would simplify, consolidate, and better target tax-based financial aid. It would cut taxes for 8.5 million families and students, simplify taxes for the more than 25 million families and students that claim education tax benefits, and provide students working toward a college degree with up to \$2,500 of assistance each year for five years.

- **Supports Minority Serving Institutions and College Access for Minority Youth.** The Budget sustains funding for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and increases funding for TRIO. These programs help disadvantaged students prepare for, enroll, and complete postsecondary education. The increase in funding would support a TRIO Demonstration Initiative to test new approaches to foster college success. The Budget also provides a 30 percent set-aside for Minority-Serving Institutions in the \$200 million First in the World competition to drive innovations in higher education that increase college completion, value, and affordability.
- **Drives Performance and Innovation in Higher Education.** To drive performance and improve outcomes in higher education, the Budget:
 - Expands the First in the World fund to \$200 million, to identify and expand promising and evidenced-based innovations and practices at colleges and universities across the country to dramatically improve educational outcomes for all students and make college more affordable;
 - Provides new College Opportunity and Graduation Bonuses to reward colleges that successfully enroll and graduate a significant number of low- and moderate-income students;
 - Proposes a new \$200 million CTE Innovation Fund to create the American Technical Training Fund, which would provide competitive grants to support the development, operation and expansion of evidence-based training programs, in partnership with industry, for skilled jobs in high-demand fields that provide a path to the middle class for low-income individuals; and
 - Strengthens academic progress requirements in the Pell Grant program to encourage students to complete their studies on time.